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SUBJECT: European Parliament: Key Leadership  
Decisions at July 20-23 Plenary

1. (U) SUMMARY: At the July 20-23 European Parliament (EP) plenary session, the 732 newly elected MEPs from the 25 member states will formally take their seats. The session's most significant event will probably be the July 22 vote on Jose Manuel Durao Barroso's nomination as Commission President. MEPs will also elect the EP's next president, choosing between leading candidates Josep Borrell, a Spanish Socialist, and Polish Liberal Bronislaw Geremek. Other items of business include determining new committee and inter-parliamentary delegation assignments, reviewing the results of the June 17-18 European Council and achievements of the Irish Presidency, and receiving a formal presentation of the Dutch Presidency's program for the rest of 2004. END SUMMARY.

EP PRESIDENT: BORRELL OR GEREMEK?

2. The 732 MEPs -- meeting for the first time since the June 13 elections -- will elect a new EP President on July 20, the plenary's opening day. There are three candidates for the post:

-- Josep Borrell: A Spanish socialist who was recently elected to the EP for the first time, Borrell has long been prominent on the Spanish political scene, most notably as Transport and Energy Minister in the 1990s. More recently, Borrell was a member of the Spanish national parliamentary delegation to the Convention that drafted the EU Constitution. He is expected to be elected EP President -- despite his lack of prior EP experience -- due to a "technical agreement" concluded between the EP's two biggest groups, the Christian Democrats and Conservatives (EPP-ED) and the Socialists (PES), that would guarantee Borrell the first 2-1/2 year term and an EPP-ED candidate (likely EPP-ED leader Hans-Gert Poettering) the second half-term.

-- Bronislaw Geremek: A Polish Liberal, Geremek -- like Borrell -- is a newcomer to the EP. A former foreign minister, he was also a member of Solidarnosc and played an active role in the fall of communism in Poland. Geremek supported U.S. intervention in Iraq and is considered an Atlanticist. His candidacy has the support of the 88 members of the newly created "Alliance of the Liberals and Democrats for Europe" (ALDE), composed of the former Liberals (ELDR) plus the French center-right UDF, Italian "Margharita," and several smaller parties. He will also be supported by the Greens.

-- Francis Wurtz: A French Communist and leader of the far-left GUE-NGL group (41 members), Wurtz has been a MEP since the first direct EP elections in 1979. He has no chance of going beyond the first round of voting, however.

3. COMMENT: Although Josep Borrell appears to be the guaranteed winner, the EPP-ED and Socialists have started to privately question their alliance. Geremek outscored Borrell in a July 13 debate; Borrell then angered the EPP-ED by declaring that since the vote would be by secret ballot, MEPs could not be forced to vote for the EPP-ED candidate for the second term -- suggesting that the PES might not uphold its end of the deal. The EPP-ED on July 14 warmly welcomed Geremek at a political group hearing; Poettering declared that "even if we do not vote for you, you should be assured of our greatest esteem." The atmosphere during Borrell's hearing the next day was, in contrast, extremely cold.

4. COMMENT, Continued: Geremek's candidacy may also look more attractive to the EPP-ED due to the Liberals' announcement that they will support EPP-ED member Jose Manuel Durao Barroso for Commission President -- a commitment that many socialist

national delegations remain reluctant to make publicly. Some EP observers believe that if the EPP-ED could guarantee an alternative center-right majority involving the ALDE, the technical agreement with the Socialists will fall apart and Geremek could become an unexpected winner of the July 20 EP Presidential vote. Building such an alternative center-right majority would probably be very difficult, however, and would have to involve euroskeptic or extreme-right factions that neither the EPP-ED nor the ALDE wants to engage. END COMMENT

#### BARROSO LIKELY TO GET A NARROW MAJORITY

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15. The EP on July 22 will vote on Jose Manuel Durao Barroso's nomination as Commission President. Barroso, who addressed EP political groups during July 13-14 hearings, will have one more chance to convince MEPs during additional hearings on July 21. Although Barroso should win confirmation, the vote will not be unanimous: the Greens, far left, and many Socialists have indicated that they will vote against him.

16. Barroso called for close transatlantic cooperation during his hearings before the Socialists (PES) and center-right (EPP-ED), stressing that "political dialogue with the U.S. is crucial" and that the EU should work closely with its "ally and partner." He defended support for the US on Iraq, asserting that "between the U.S. and Saddam, I chose the U.S.". However, during his July 13 hearing with the Green party, he added: "I have a great admiration for the United States, its civil society, its universities, and its vitality. But I hate arrogance, militarism, and unilateralism."

#### DEBATES ON IRISH AND DUTCH PRESIDENCY

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17. Also on July 21, Irish Prime Minister Bertie Ahern will report to MEPs on the progress made under the Irish Presidency. His statement will include the two European Council meetings in June, which led to agreement on both a draft constitutional treaty and the nomination of Jose Manuel Durao Barroso as Commission President. Later in the day, Dutch Prime Minister Jan Peter Balkenende will lay out the Dutch Presidency's working program for July-December 2004.

#### NEW EP COMMITTEES AND DELEGATIONS

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18. On July 22 MEPs will also decide on the membership of Parliament's committees and inter-parliamentary delegations (including the delegation responsible for relations with the United States and the Transatlantic Legislators' Dialogue) for the next two and a half years. That afternoon, most committees will hold their first meetings, at which they will elect their own Chairs and Vice-Chairs. (NOTE: The top jobs in committees and delegations, as well as EP vice-presidents and quaestors, are distributed among the various political groups according to a mathematical method of calculation called the "D'hondt procedure." However, we were told that deals between political groups can sometimes "bend" the strict attribution rules. END NOTE.)

MCKINLEY